TALES OF FO'C'S'LE AND CABIN

THE EXTRAORDINARY PASSENGER

EVERY one knows what a nuisance a certain type of passenger on shipboard becomes. He invades the bridge and asks foolish questions of the quartermaster at the wheel until driven off. He wanders around inventing petty errands to monopolize the deck steward's time. He patronizes the steerage and creates disorder by throwing pennies to the children below. He raises a fearful row because the dining room steward has not seated him at the captain's table. At the sight of him the officers of the liner flee without shame.

I was coming home on the Mongolia from Japan and discussing this species with a friend when a slight, apparently feeble woman who seemed to be travelling first cabin all alone passed our deck chairs. She kept one hand on the deck rail, and as she walked her feet never appeared beneath the hem of her dress, so that she had a curious effect of merely gliding by. Her anxious and lined face, her gray hair and everything about her suggested that she could not be less than 70. I remarked as much, adding my wonder that so old and frail a person should travel without company. My friend astonished me with the information that she was 81.

"I know her quite well," he explained, "for I come from the same town in Delaware. She is 81 and absolutely without so much as a maid to wait on her. She is a remarkable woman, however, and the very opposite of the kind of passenger we have been denouncing. She is the most self-reliant person, man or woman, that I have ever met and she is the heroine of a most unusual story which proves it."

Of course I wanted to hear it. He told me that his eighty-one-year-old heroine's name was Matilda Dowell. Yes, Miss Dowell. She was and had been for forty years a school teacher in the Delaware town. It was a private school. Of course she must have taught elsewhere for years before that. She was still nominally teaching, but actually was relieved of most of the work.

"She has a passion for travel and goes somewhere every year," my friend continued. "I don't know how many times she has crossed the Atlantic, but I do know that this is not the first time she has crossed the Pacific. The story I am going to tell you concerns a Pacific transit that she made fifteen years ago, when she was a young, spry person of 66 years.

"Miss Dowell had then been going abroad for a long time and had decided, after much experiment on these annual excursions, that she wanted no one else with her. She had taken women companions, but found them worthless. None of them had been about as much as she, and instead of looking after tickets, luggage, rooms, boats and so on, she had to look after them. After a while she got the habit of taking some one of her numerous nieces with her. The same objection held good: they were in the way, and I judge that they were never particularly grateful. They seemed to consider that she was only doing her duty in taking her young relatives abroad. Miss Dowell did not look on it in just that light. She was not conceited, but she liked to think that she was conferring a favor.

"So, at the age of 60, before it should be too late, she inflicted a severe shock on these youngsters by resuming her journeys without them. The discovery that their presence with her was not a part of the universal scheme of things somewhat altered their demeanor toward her. I believe several of them even grew very nice toward the old lady, but she had had her lesson and left them to find their own way about.

"But to get down to my story. In her sixty-seventh year, when school closed for the summer, she had made up her mind to make a journey on a sailing ship. I saw her that spring and she complained of being tired.

"'I need a good long time away from land,' she assured me. 'I haven't been on a sailing vessel—I mean on the ocean—for thirty years. I gave it up then because it seemed as if every time I took a sailing ship she was wrecked or met awful head winds or was becalmed for weeks on end or something. I found that by the time I reached anywhere it was time to turn right around and come back, and as I wanted to visit countries I decided to stick to steamers. But now I don't care whether I fetch anywhere or not. I'm just going for a rest on the ocean wave.' Miss Dowell is sometimes rather poetically hackneyed in her diction.

"She took passage on a square rigger, the Gentle Bosom of Liverpool, Capt. Roberts (a Welshman) master. The Gentle Bosom was a nice, peaceable old creature of about 2,000 tons, and Capt. Roberts had loaded her with a general cargo at New York. She was bound for Hongkong. Miss Dowell came to New York by train and boarded the ship there. She and Mrs. Roberts, the captain's wife, were the only women aboard. There were two mates and the usual lot of people, including several British apprentices. The crew forward numbered fourteen.

"Miss Dowell, who told me about it afterward, says that she thoroughly enjoyed the first part of the passage. The Gentle Bosom went quietly down till she caught the northeast trade wind and slipped from that into the southeast trade almost without striking the equatorial belt of calms. When she was a couple of months out she began to strike cool weather off the Argentine coast. In a couple of weeks she was hitting the long rollers that sweep around the southern tips of the world and seem to roll most grandly off Cape Horn. It was now July—winter at the Cape. The Gentle Bosom was making the westward passage of the Horn, one of the most difficult things in the annals of sailing vessels. Why, there was once a ship that tried to go westward around Cape Horn in bad weather, with head winds, and after 230-odd days, her provisions and water gone, fetched up in Sydney, when she had meant to turn north and strike for San Francisco. But I'm getting off on something else.

"The weather was very bad. The head winds were constant and the Gentle Bosom became merged in the very ungentle bosom of the Cape Horn seas. There were several terrific storms, in one of which the foremast was carried away and both mates were swept overboard and lost. It was a crushing disaster. Poor Capt. Roberts was frantic with grief. As a matter of fact, aside from the loss of two fine men under circumstances that could not be helped, but which would, of course, occasion all sorts of grave inquiries at home in England—aside from that, the matter was extremely serious, for it left only himself to navigate the ship. There was no one else qualified to do it.

"Miss Dowell and the Captain's wife were compelled to keep to the cabin for several weeks, and while she did justice to the weather in telling about it afterward she also remembered the amusing things that befell. She was trying to sleep one night when the Gentle Bosom gave a sudden heave and pitched her on the floor. At the same time the small watertank over the washstand broke from its moorings and emptied its full contents on her. The swing threw the cabin steward against her door, which burst in. Fortunately at that instant the light in the madly swinging lamp in the cabin went out.

"The Cape was, however, successfully weathered, the captain standing watch eight hours at a time and the boatswain standing watch at intervals to relieve him and let him get time to eat and sleep. After a bitter month the Gentle Bosom took a slope to the northwest, and striking fair weather proceeded smoothly toward Hongkong, which was, however, a long, long way off—the whole width of the Pacific.

"Then the real blow befell. Capt. Roberts had for some time had trouble with his eyes. The hardship and exposure imposed upon him by the loss of his mates now began to tell, and after a little he found that he was going blind. The thought filled him with horror. He did not dare tell any one at first. He did not dare tell his wife, and obviously he would not tell the boatswain or any of the petty officers if it could be helped. They were not competent to navigate the ship. He was the only man aboard who was.

"Capt. Roberts was a very level-headed man. He had had similar attacks before, but none so bad as this. He remembered that the specialist home in England had told him that he might some day have an attack much worse than any that had preceded it, one that would render him almost completely blind for some time, some weeks or even months. The specialist had added that he need not lose hope if this happened to him, for the ailment was not incurable.

"'It will only mean that matters have reached a crisis and that an operation will be necessary to restore your sight,' the great doctor had said gently. 'Your blindness will remain until that operation is performed, but if it is not too long delayed, if it is done within a year or so, the chances are very good that you will almost entirely recover your sight, and this recovery is likely to be permanent.'

"But in the meantime, reflected Capt. Roberts despairingly as he stood with dimmed vision on his ship in the lower Pacific, what was he to do? It would be necessary to confide in some one. He dared not tell his little, shrinking wife. She would be frightened to death. Whomever he told must be some one who could face the fact with a calm as great as his own, some one who could help him to get through. The best he could do was to get his ship to some of the more sizable islands in mid-Pacific. There he could not probably get treatment, but he would be able to get a skilled navigator or two and he could go on with his ship to Hongkong, where there were hospitals and friends and very good doctors indeed. To make the islands! That was the point. But how? Already he could not read the finer degrees on the compass.

"And then in a flash of revelation he looked across the deck and saw Miss Dowell. She was sitting in a wicker chair and looking earnestly up at the mizzentop as it she longed to defy age and convention by going aloft. Miss Dowell was the very person! She would keep his secret. She was cool, good humored, resourceful, unafraid, intelligent. She would pull him through!

"He went over and sat down in a chair beside her which his wife had deserted several minutes before. In a low tone that would not be overheard by the man at the wheel he told her his whole desperate plight.

"The quick witted woman of 66 listened attentively. When he told her that he was going blind she gave a smothered ejaculation of pity and horror. But for the rest she had no words, only instant thinking and planning that showed in her pleasant old face and her bright eyes. She anticipated his petition. She broke in with:

"'What port can you make?'

"'I had thought of Fiji,' murmured Capt. Roberts.

"'How far is it?' demanded Miss Dowell.

"'It is about 2,000 miles in a direct course,' answered the captain. 'The weather should be generally fine and barring storms, we should make it with the southeast trade nearly all the way, in ten days or two weeks.'

"'I can help you and I will. We'll do it,' said Miss Dowell in a low but confident tone. 'Only one thing; you must not tell any one else, especially your wife. She would be so frightened she would be ill.'

"'I know,' answered Capt. Roberts, and that was all that was said between them.

"Miss Dowell had not familiarized herself with the routine of the sailing ship for nothing. She advanced her own suggestions and acted on her own ideas in a way that almost took away Capt. Roberts's breath. When he was on deck and strolled to glance at the compass she was always beside him. As he turned and walked away she followed and gave him the bearing in a murmur of conversation at the far end of the poop. She watched the sails for him and told him if the upper sails were spilling the breeze. She wrote up the ship's log at his dictation, contriving to do this in moments when she could slip away from Mrs. Roberts. Fortunately the blindness crept on the captain very gradually; although he was not able to distinguish compass bearings clearly, he could still see things that were quite close to him, so that he got through meals without embarrassment. And he was also able to see larger shapes at a distance and was able to tell what sails were set and to give orders for trimming sail without perceptible hesitation.

"The most difficult times were in two or three wind squalls that came up suddenly. By good luck they were all in the daytime. Miss Dowell made it a point to be on deck practically all day, and when Mrs. Roberts marveled at her endurance of the tropical sun she declared that she liked it—that it was just this sea sun and air that she had come for.

"The question of getting the ship's position correctly came up at the very outset of the strange cooperative enterprise, in which Miss Dowell and the captain were secret sharers. Miss Dowell suggested the way to solve it. She would learn to handle the sextant, Capt. Roberts must teach her how at once, apparently for her amusement. Then she would 'shoot the sun' each day and he should do so, too, or rather, go through the motions. They would seem to be comparing the readings to determine if she had done it correctly, but in reality there would be only one reading—her own, and on it the faithfulness of the ship's course would have to depend. This was the hardest thing for Capt. Roberts to resign himself to, nevertheless it had to be done.

"The fate of his ship depended upon the carefulness of a sixty-six-year-old woman passenger whom he had brought along, as much as anything, to be company for his wife. It was a bitter reflection. But Miss Dowell saw this and acted with such simple, matter of fact ease that Capt. Roberts, who had his share of Welsh temperament, forgot his stinging feeling of defeat in the concentrated attention to the figures on the table before him.

"Still under the guise of satisfying an old woman's absurd craving for nautical knowledge Capt. Roberts figured away with his chart spread out on the cabin table at noon each day. Miss Dowell with praiseworthy attention to his lessons added, subtracted, divided and rolled logarithms. She had not been a teacher for several decades of school children without reason. She could learn things as well as impart them. Capt. Roberts was astounded at her grasp of mathematics. She not only understood what he told her, but she could tell him things about his calculations that he had never known.

"So they sailed on until they were within 500 miles of the Fiji group. Then came a night with a severe storm. The wind blew with hurricane force and the Gentle Bosom stood up before it as best she could, with only a rag of a reefed main lower topsail to give her steerage way. That night Capt. Roberts spent on deck, sightless and all the tumult, gripping the weather rail. And the extraordinary passenger, the old maid, with graying hair, wrapped in oilskins, stood beside him. The man at the wheel, struggling with all his strength to keep the ship's helm up, looked at this strange figure with superstitious awe. What was a woman doing on deck in such weather? Capt. Roberts begged Miss Dowell to go below, but she did so only once during the dark hours, to drink some hot coffee prepared by the cabin steward.

"She was not actually needed there, but she feared lest something should happen to betray the captain's secret. With herself on deck she felt sure that he would not be left unguarded. And she was right. When the storm abated and a pink horizon gave birth to the splendid tropical sun there was no more suspicion that the ship had been guided that night by a blind man than there was that Miss Dowell had coached him.

"There was no further incident of importance. As the ship drew nearer Fiji Capt. Roberts's anxiety as to the correctness of his calculations of her position and the consequent determination of her course grew feverish. He could hardly refrain from exhibiting it. The boatswain was acting practically as mate and was taking half the watches, Capt. Roberts—and Miss Dowell—stood the rest. Fortunately, just before reaching the islands the Gentle Bosom sighted and exchanged signals with a bark bound from San Francisco for Sydney. It was about 1 o'clock in the afternoon and the ships traded estimates of position. The bark's figures showed that Miss Dowell's calculations, made under Capt. Roberts's tutelage, could not be more than a few seconds out of the way in latitude, and curiously enough, the figures for longitude, usually so much more difficult to be sure of, were in exact agreement. Capt. Roberts muttered a word of praise in the midst of his joking banter on deck that pleased Miss Dowell more than the commendation of a whole line of principals in the select institution of whose faculty she was a member.

"Two days more and the smaller islands of the Fiji group came in sight, and after another forty-eight hours sailing the Gentle Bosom anchored in the harbor of Suva. Capt. Roberts, with a broken voice, uttered some words of gratitude to the school teacher while he wrung her hand until she thought he would squeeze it off. She retreated to her cabin. Mrs. Roberts, coming in a little later, was astonished to find her crying.

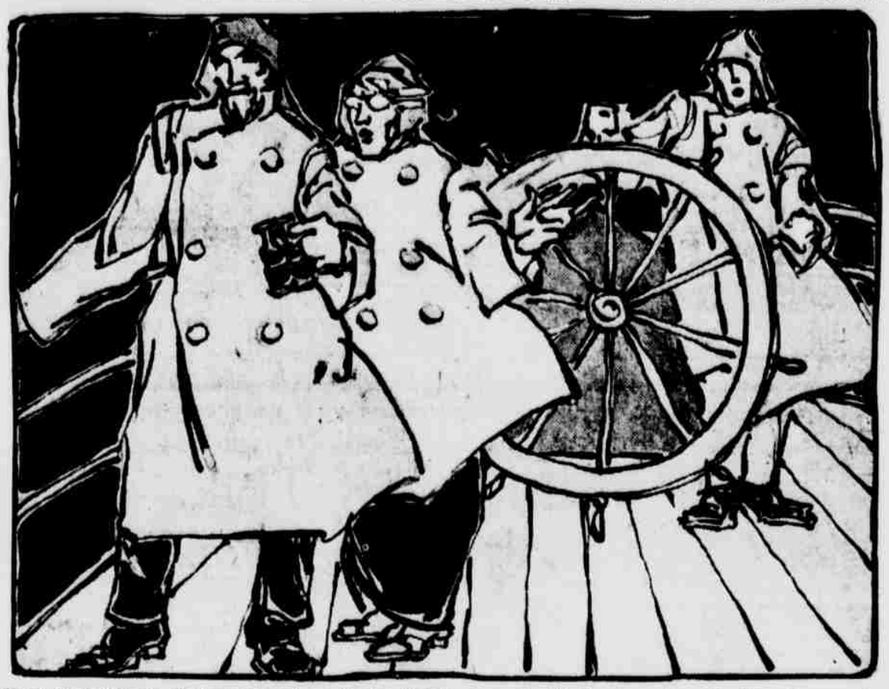
"At Suva Capt. Roberts got two mates and made a report to the British Consul, to whom he confided his serious situation, and asked him what he had best do. The matter was eventually arranged by sending the Gentle Bosom on to Hongkong under charge of another master. Capt. Roberts went on with her as a passenger himself, having been relieved at once on cabling the details of his case to the ship's owners. At Hongkong he was operated on and recovered his sight entirely, and, as has developed since, permanently. Until it could be established that his recovery was lasting he lived with his wife in a little village in England where they had a cottage.

"I did not tell you about their baby, a girl who was born in Hongkong about the time of the operation on Capt. Roberts's eyes. That was why both the captain and Miss Dowell were so anxious to keep the news of the captain's misfortune from his wife until the Gentle Bosom should have made port.

"Miss Dowell did not go on with them to Hongkong, but remained in Fiji. She was really ill for some time. Reaction, I suppose. The British Consul came to call on her and when the news of her courageous behavior got abroad, as it gradually did, half the people of the islands called or sent flowers or crowded about the hotel to see how she was doing. She was a sixty-six-year-old heroine, possibly the oldest popular heroine ever known in that part of the world. As she gradually recovered she was feted and shown about so that it was only with the utmost difficulty that she managed to get a boat away in time to get back to America in the fall. Even then she was late, the fall term having begun, but when the head of her school heard something about what had happened, as he did from several dozens of letters that came to him, he readily excused his delinquent teacher.

"That is the story of the feeble old lady you see coming toward us again. This must be her twentieth circuit of the deck. She is almost as active as she was when I first knew her forty years ago. A wonderful woman! And a great passenger to have on board in an emergency! To hear her tell the story you wouldn't think she had done anything; she treats it as a good deal of a joke and stresses her troubles with the sextant and her perplexities before the chronometer. But I know more than she told me and I'm telling you what I know. Would you like to meet her?"

A slight, apparently feeble woman passed our deck chairs.



That night Capt. Roberts spent on deck, sightless amid all the tumult, gripping the weather rail. And the extraordinary passenger, wrapped in oilskins, stood beside him.

The captain, with a broken voice, uttered some words of gratitude to the school teacher while he wrung her hand.

FAMOUS MINSTRELS OF THE EARLY DAYS

Continued from Sixth Page.

restrained from playing. The company was compelled to close and go travelling. Christy, however, returned and opened in a blaze of glory at Niblo's Saloon November 7, 1859, at the expiration of the eighteen months. Subsequently he moved opposite, to 585 Broadway.

Later he was with the companies of J. W. Raynor and Hooley. January 16, 1867, with G. W. H. Griffin, he organized Griffin & Christy's Minstrels, opening at the Fifth Avenue Theatre (later and until its demolition known as the Madison Square Theatre). His last appearance was with Hooley's Minstrels in Brooklyn May 2, 1868.

George Christy was truly one of the greatest artists that graced the minstrel stage. He was the acme of versatility. Equally at home in trousers or skirts, he was always the artist supreme. A wonder as a manipulator of the bones on the end, where he was said to be a picture. He died in this city May 12, 1872.

Eugene, or the Great Eugene, as he was generally designated, really had a right to use that much abused adjective. It doesn't always happen that way. He was born Eugene D'Amell in this city, June 4, 1836. Subsequently by legal process his name was shortened to Amell. As a female impersonator Eugene never was surpassed in minstrelsy. His makeup was marvellous; he could sing and he could dance. His professional debut was made in this city as a member of Wood's Minstrels in 1853, when he was about seventeen years old. He continued with Wood after George Christy became a partner and until the latter went to California, when Eugene formed one of the company. He remained practically under the Christy banner until the formation of the famous Hooley & Campbell's Minstrels, who gave their first performance in Boston February 6, 1860.

Twice was he with Unsworth's Minstrels; first in 1861 and later in 1871. In Philadelphia he was associated with Moran & Dixie, with Frank Moran, Carncross & Dixie and Carncross; in Liverpool with Sam Hague, in San Francisco with Emerson and in New York with Cotton & Reed's Minstrels. He died in Brooklyn, N. Y., January 1, 1907.

G. W. H. Griffin was an excellent interlocutor, a good singer and a finely educated man. He was a composer of more than ordinary merit; several well known songs and sketches came from his pen. His first appearance was made with the Boston Harmonists in Palmyra, N. Y., when he was about 21 years old, he having been born in Gloucester, Mass., March 21, 1829.

He soon came to New York, where in 1853 he joined Wood's Minstrels, and continued there after the formation of the partnership of Wood & Christy and until the final dissolution in 1858, when he went with Christy to California. Griffin was one of the organizers and proprietors of Hooley & Campbell's Minstrels in 1860. The last performance of this company was given July 13, 1861. On October 28, 1861, Griffin and R. M. Hooley organized the famous Hooley Minstrels in this city. Just one year later Hooley began his long stay at Court and Remsen streets, Brooklyn, Griffin having severed his connection with the company two months earlier.

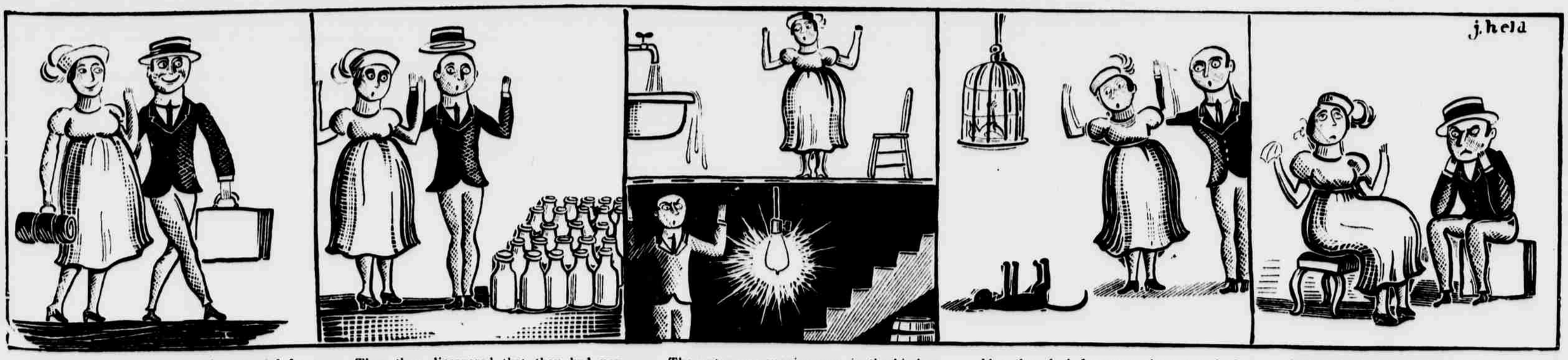
While Griffin was so actively associated with the formation of prominent companies, only once, in 1867, when Griffin & Christy came into existence, was his name prominently coupled with any burnt cork troupe. During his long career he was actively associated with the troupes of Bryant and Kelly & Leon in New York; Hooley, in Brooklyn; Hooley, in Chicago, and Unsworth's Minstrels, a travelling organization. His last minstrel appearance was in Brooklyn, with a company under his own management. Later he played variety engagements, making his last public appearance with the Harrigan & Hart Company in Boston, June 7, 1879. He died in Brooklyn, N. Y., July 11, 1879.

James Budworth was not only a great minstrel but he was a good actor and an exceptionally good mimic. His imitations of noted stage celebrities were regarded generally as gems. Budworth was born in Philadelphia December 24, 1831. His debut was made at the Park Theatre, this city, in 1848 as a vocalist.

When George Christy was enjoined from appearing with his company in this city in 1859 Jim Budworth was the man selected to take his place, which he did with credit. Later he filled prominent engagements with the companies of Mrs. Matt Peel and with Hooley in Brooklyn. Almost exactly fifty years ago (August 27, 1866) with his brother William, also a fine performer, he opened with Budworth's Minstrels at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, this city. Budworth gained particular renown as a banjoist, but was equally proficient on the Japanese and Chinese fiddles. As a German comedian he was excellent. His *John Schmidt* in "The Persecuted Dutchman" was splendidly received. He also played the title role in "Rip Van Winkle." Budworth's son Frank was a good Chinese impersonator. James Budworth died in this city March 15, 1875.

Gus Howard was a protege of George Christy. He made his first appearance with Christy and Wood in New York in 1855. He went to California with Christy in 1858, subsequently appearing with Unsworth's and Hooley & Campbell's Minstrels. He became an adept in the handling of the bones, tambourine and as a banjoist. He was also with the Wallace Sisters combination. At the time of his death in Alexandria, Va., he was about 35 years old—March 27, 1874.

FABLE OF THE HOMECOMING - - - - - - - - - By john held



Once upon a time a couple returned from their vacation bubbling over with happiness.

Then they discovered that they had neglected to stop the milk.

The water was running over in the kitchen and the cellar light had been burning all summer.

Also they had forgotten the cat and the parrakeet.

And so the joyous memories of the vacation departed.

Moral: There are two sides to every vacation.